

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

July 15-16, 2004

Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina

Members present: Robert Staton, Alex Martin, Traci Young Cooper, Robert C. Daniel, Dennis Drew, Senator Mike Fair, Wallace Hall, Susan Marlowe, Representative Joe Neal, Harold C. Stowe, Molly Spearman for Superintendent Tenenbaum, Representative Robert Walker, Judy H. Williams, Larry Wilson

Thursday, July 15, 1:00 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions: Mr. Staton welcomed members and guests to the retreat.

Approval of the Minutes: The minutes of the June 2004 meeting were approved as distributed.

Mr. Staton referred members to the annual objectives, located under Tab 6, and asked that they attend to the issues so that the South Carolina's progress could continue. He noted the summaries of work behind Tab 2 and asked if there were questions. Mrs. Marlowe asked about the implementation of alternative technical assistance programs; Mr. Stowe asked about the progress with respect to the long-range plan. Mr. Wilson recommended that the long-range plan be reviewed to arrange issues or actions in order of priority for achieving the 2010 goal. Mrs. Marlowe suggested that the achievement would be enhanced with a stronger partnership with higher education.

Graduation Rate: Dr. Horne began with a discussion of the requirements for a high school diploma and the variation among those requirements across the states. He discussed the number of units, specific units required and other requirements such as the attendance requirement employed in South Carolina. Discussants noted that Texas is defining two cut points on the high school exam—one for graduation from high school and one for college admission. Despite the earning of a high school diploma, the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education (SBTCE) reports that between 30 and 50 percent of students require at least one remedial course, primarily in mathematics. Questions were raised about the comparative teacher quality in states with higher graduation rates.

Mr. Potter detailed a number of methodologies for calculating the high school graduation rate and South Carolina's rank among states within each methodology. Mr. Stowe asked that the graduation rates be calculated historically to determine any patterns in the decline that might be identified within the calculation differences.

Dr. Eugene Bottoms, Senior Vice President of the Southern Regional Education Board, following a discussion of "when" the problem occurs, suggested that we should not assume that "right by grade eight" remedies the problem. We must address the circumstance of the high school as well.

Dr. Harry Miley, Dr. Randy Martin and Dr. David Cowen (representing Miley and Associates, the Moore School of Business at USC and

the Department of Geography, USC) presented national and statewide data identifying correlates of graduation rate nationally and within South Carolina. Their data also showcased the linkages between high school graduation and other successes or conditions in life. These data were mapped. Discussants questioned issues of poverty, grade level and asked for the names of districts who are achieving against the norm. There were also questions about students who would not be in the data sets (students in private sector, students who drop out, students who may transfer to other schools).

Dr. Bottoms, (power point distributed at the meeting) offered a multi-state view. He pointed out that a number of states are considering a system of choice high schools, particularly for career and technology, within the state (e.g., Massachusetts); Virginia and Oklahoma do not allow students to drop out until 18; Arkansas has a system of small high schools; Delaware has a strong program for students between grade eight and grade nine;; and Maine has developed a brochure about “what you ought to quit doing in high school.” He also shared examination alternatives used in other states so that students could meet the requirements through a matrix, rather than one test. He suggested that South Carolina pursue the use of teams of administrators and teachers in the leadership development program.

Mr. Daryl Brown, principal at Carvers’ Bay High School, suggested that the diploma is the number one force to keep students in high school. He discussed a challenge that he faces with parents who recognize the importance of a diploma for their children yet who work two or three jobs and do not know how to motivate their children to succeed. He is concerned particularly with the percentage of minority students in special education and the battle with parents, particularly since a special education placement can increase Medicaid allotments. He supported a matrix approach to high school testing.

Dr. James Hudgins, executive director of the State Board for Comprehensive and Technical Education, stated that SBTCE colleges enroll about 35 percent of South Carolina high school graduates. He indicated that the diploma did *Not* equal college-level work, did not mean that students are prepared to work, did not mean that the student was in demand from business and industry and did not mean that the student had the motivation to succeed. He stated that a strong high school diploma was the difference between success and failure in the new economy. It ought to mean readiness for college –general education, work ethic, values and readiness to benefit from on the job training. It ought to be the ability to do college-level work, literacy, and valuing of lifelong learning. It ought to mean a working knowledge of the basic economic principles of our society. He recommended a speech by Lester Thoreau of MIT on education and economic development. Thoreau argues that the education model we use is out-of-date—“we have the best 25 percent of the workforce and the worst 75 percent.” He recommended that South Carolina address articulation agreements across levels, provide quality options for college preparation, address the ineffectiveness of the senior year, determine how best to use the separate career technology centers and determine what the role of the technical colleges is.

Mr. Reynolds, president of Total Comfort Systems, discussed competency, effectiveness and efficiency. He indicated that school boards need to have vision and that the State Department of Education needed to be visionary and to act boldly and that South Carolina’s failure to act boldly left us without plans of what happens after five years. He said the dropout rate should be the rallying cry. He proposed mandatory parent training in grade nine and a focus on adult education (Dr.

Hudgins said the “undereducated adult is South Carolina’s number one problem.”) Mr. Reynolds suggested involving young people in solving the dropout problems and also indicated that we must connect young people to careers.

Mr. Staton asked members for questions and/or issues upon which we needed to follow up:

- Agreement on the calculation of graduation rates with a methodology that does not penalize students or schools for those who graduate in five or six years;
- Information on programs that increase student efficacy and develop their value systems;
- Interventions and encouragements for students in middle school;
- Strategies to identify student difficulties earlier, relentless remediation, and intentional remediation;
- Details on the collateral damage of under education;
- EOC action to develop the collective will to change;
- Emphasis on the linkages between educational achievement and economic development;
- Support for and involvement of parents as students transition from one school level to another;
- Pursuit of the Pathways objectives

Mrs. Spearman commented on the work the State Department of Education staff and Superintendent Tenenbaum had completed in the areas under discussion.

The EOC recessed for dinner.

Friday, July 16

The EOC went into Executive Session at 8:00 a.m. The EOC returned from Executive Session.

The EOC approved an extension of the contract for the Executive Director.

The EOC elected Alex Martin as vice-chairman by acclamation.

Mr. Staton asked members wishing to change subcommittees to inform Dr. Anderson. Members discussed the meeting structure and scheduling. Some suggested that the EOC should meet less frequently but for an extended time period. There was discussion of the merits of meeting on a day other than Thursday. Members noted that attendance at subcommittee meetings was difficult because it necessitated two full days when travel is added to meeting time.

Reading: Mr. Potter began with a profile of performance on assessments over time, noting the difference in mathematics, reading and writing achievements. Members discussed a variety of reasons why reading performance has not improved at the same rate as the other two content areas.

Dr. Anderson presented material on the funding of reading instruction and the alignment of state policies.

Dr. Jill Lewis, Board of Directors of the International Reading Association (IRA), presented the recommendations of the IRA as well as its position statement on reading coaches. She detailed through a series of steps the areas for policy development and implementation (handout included in materials). Mr. Stowe asked her advice, if funding is fixed, how we should restructure our spending. She indicated that, rather than “double-up” on kindergarten through third grade, we should invest resources at the middle grades and in high school. She also indicated that it is not just a funding issue, but one of curriculum and the will to change instruction. Mrs. Marlowe asked if skills in teaching reading are embedded in the National Board certification process. Dr. Lewis indicated they are not. She outlined the requirements in states that are reading-specific. Rep. Walker asked if there are courses that should be required and how states should build these skills into teacher certification. Dr. Lewis indicated the emphasis is not just on the first course and experience but the entire teacher preparatory curriculum.

Dr. Janice Poda, Division of Teacher Quality, State Department of Education, outlined South Carolina’s approach to teacher preparation for reading including programmatic approval and the constraints within the undergraduate program. She shared materials from the colleges and other states on the approaches used to introduce future teachers to the concepts of teaching reading (handouts provided). She also shared the specific requirements for add-on certifications or endorsements in reading and provided a series of recommendations.

PAIRS: Mr. Stowe shared information on the EOC public awareness project and outlined the commitments needed from EOC members. Rachel Silver and Rick Silver presented information related to the image and program development. Mr. Wilson questioned areas in which the program might overlap with the Chamber of Commerce’s High Performance Partnership Program. Dr. Lewis offered information on the Verizon project in New Jersey.

S90: Dr. Anderson presented information on the status of S90, a bill addressing school board development and ad hoc members.

Charter School Advisory Committee: Mr. Stowe informed EOC members of his experiences. Rep. Walker asked that the discussion be deferred until another meeting when more time was available.

Objectives for 2004-2005: Mr. Staton asked members to identify critical issues for the coming year. These are to be developed into objectives prior to the August meeting. These included the following:

- Determine how current funding for professional development could be used to address reading issues across the grades
- Review the long-range plan thoroughly, prioritize and weight the recommendations and direct our time and energy toward those actions
- Shine a light on the graduation rate and address the tactical issues such as the calculation, special education and the utilization of teacher and principal specialists v. local capacity development
- Conduct additional work on the connection between K-12 and higher education
- Conduct research or identify efficacy development systems
- Extend parental involvement and community outreach activities
- Emphasize administrator training in reading instruction

- Explore the SREB ideas on high school completion and career preparation
- Focus on grades 4-8
- Explore the team concept in leadership development
- Prepare schools and communities to deal with the increase in rigor for the report card
- Review Title 59 and determine what can be eliminated, revised and retained
- Prepare for the court decision regarding public education funding
- Address issues of seat time v. competency
- Involve students in the dropout solution
- Connect with higher education
- Address, through professional development, the needs of the middle school
- Determine if a middle track is needed in the high school
- Determine the rationale for the graduation requirements
- Explore how reading can be given greater weight in teacher preparation and evaluation
- Develop another presentation for the community on the economic impact of young people earning a high school diploma
- Pursue improvements in school governance
- Develop articulation agreements and connections with higher education
- Explore incentives and disincentives in the placement of students in special education
- Exploring options to the seat time requirements

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.